United Nations A/ES-10/PV.1

General Assembly
Tenth Emergency Special Session

Official Records

1st plenary meeting
Thursday, 24 April 1997, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . . (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening of the session by the Chairman of the delegation of Malaysia

The President: I declare open the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly.

In connection with this emergency special session, a note by the Secretary-General on the convening of the special session has been circulated in document A/ES-10/1.

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The President: I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Organization of work

The President: With the permission of members, I should like to draw the Assembly's attention to rule 63, which states:

"Notwithstanding the provisions of any other rule and unless the General Assembly decides otherwise, the Assembly, in case of an emergency special session, shall convene in plenary meeting only and proceed directly to consider the item proposed for consideration in the request for the holding of the session, without previous reference to the General Committee or to any other committee; the President and Vice-Presidents for such emergency special sessions shall be, respectively, the chairmen of those delegations from which were elected the President and Vice-Presidents of the previous session."

I shall repeat the first part of that rule:

"Notwithstanding the provisions of any other rule and unless the General Assembly decides otherwise...".

If there is no objection, I shall take it that the General Assembly will proceed in accordance with that rule.

It was so decided.

The President: I am sure I can rely on the assistance of the Vice-Presidents in the exercise of my duties during the present session.

97-85465 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

The President: Before turning to the next item on the agenda, I should like, in keeping with established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/ES-10/3, which contains a letter addressed to me by the Secretary-General, informing the Assembly that 26 Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I should like to remind delegations that under Article 19 of the Charter a member of the United Nations which is in arrears in payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Credentials of representatives to the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly

(a) Appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee

(b) Report of the Credentials Committee

The President: We shall now proceed to the appointment of a Credentials Committee, as provided for in rule 28 of the rules of procedure.

With a view to expediting the work of the emergency special session and in accordance with precedents, it might be appropriate if the Credentials Committee were to consist of those members which served during the fifty-first regular session, namely, China, the Dominican Republic, Gabon, the Netherlands, Paraguay, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Sierra Leone and the United States of America.

If there is no objection, I shall consider the Credentials Committee constituted accordingly.

It was so decided.

The President: I should like to point out that the Secretary-General, in his note convening this emergency special session, indicated that credentials for those representatives who are not already authorized to represent their Governments at all sessions of the General Assembly should be issued in accordance with rule 27 of the rules of procedure and may be presented by facsimile or by cable.

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda

The President: The provisional agenda is contained in document A/ES-10/2.

The agenda was adopted.

The President: Mr. Secretary-General, representatives, I thank you for your decision to ask me to preside.

This emergency special session of the General Assembly reflects the conviction of the membership that there exists an increasingly grave situation involving peace and security. In the past two months, the Security Council twice held extensive discussions, and the General Assembly once, on the illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories. For the second time, the issue has been placed before the General Assembly. The discussions in the Security Council have proved to be inconclusive, since it has been unable to take action because of lack of unanimity of its permanent Members.

The convening of this session, which is being held in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 377 (V) of 3 November 1950, entitled "Uniting for Peace", at the request of a Member State and with the concurrence of a large majority of Members, demonstrates clearly their gravest concern and awareness of the implications of the present situation.

The maintenance of international peace and security is certainly a matter of concern to all States as well as people. A threat to peace and security in any part of the world has a direct bearing on universal peace and security. No nation or group of nations can claim immunity from such developments. It is therefore appropriate that the General Assembly, given that the Security Council has not been able to take action due to

the lack of unanimity of its permanent members, be the universal assembly to address the issue effectively.

I have referred to the obligation placed upon this Organization to act in the face of this crisis. Permit me to recall here that there are certain obligations which affect us all: there is the obligation assumed by each Member State under the Charter to ensure that international peace, security and justice shall not be endangered; and there is the obligation, shared by all Members, to respect the decisions of this Organization.

This emergency special session of the General Assembly underlines the resolve of Members to seek recourse in the General Assembly to resolve the issue with all peaceful means, fearful of grave consequences in the event the issue has not been satisfactorily resolved. It is not being conducted with rancour or acrimony, but in an effort to eliminate tension and to protect and save the peace process at this critical juncture. Our meeting today and tomorrow underscores the important role of the General Assembly and its concomitant responsibility in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Agenda item 5

Illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

The President: Before calling on the first speaker, I should like to propose that the list of speakers be closed at 4 p.m. this afternoon. May I take it that the Assembly agrees to this proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: I therefore request delegations that wish to participate in the debate but have not yet inscribed their names on the list of speakers to do so as soon as possible.

In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 3237 (XXIX), of 22 November 1974, and 43/177, of 15 December 1988, I now call on the Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Yes, uniting for peace. Uniting against the violation of international law and United Nations resolutions. Uniting to confront the arrogance of power and the mentality of occupation. Uniting to oppose misuse of the veto and attempts to neutralize the Security Council. Uniting in order to rescue the Middle East peace process. Yes, uniting for a just solution to the question of Palestine and the establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region.

Allow me to extend to you, Sir, our gratitude and our highest consideration. Allow me also especially to thank His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his valuable efforts and his wise leadership. I should like also to convey, on behalf of the Palestinian people and their leadership, our sincerest thanks and appreciation to our Arab and Islamic brethren and the fraternal members of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as to all those who have extended their support, enabling the international community to take such a firm stance and enabling the General Assembly and the Member States to carry out their responsibilities to confront the continuing illegal actions by Israel, the occupying Power, which threaten the Middle East peace process and hence threaten international peace and security.

We strongly hope that the General Assembly, at this tenth emergency special session, will adopt the necessary recommendations for Member States to take appropriate collective measures to guarantee respect for international law, contractual obligations and the relevant United Nations resolutions, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

The Middle East peace process heralded an end to a long era of conflict and became the harbinger of a promising future for the region and its peoples. The famous handshake on the lawn of the White House in 1993 became a symbol of a new hope and of the ability to achieve the peace of the brave. This peace was pursued on the basis of the mutual recognition of the legitimate rights of both peoples and their desire to live in peaceful coexistence and mutual dignity and security and to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement and a historic reconciliation through the agreed political process. These are the words of the Declaration of Principles, which also stated that the permanent settlement must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

It was on this basis, and within this context, that the two sides agreed on a transitional period of five years for interim self-government arrangements and also agreed to postpone negotiations on a number of important issues, including the future of Jerusalem and the settlements, until a time not later than the beginning of the third year of negotiations.

This is the agreement that led to the significant changes we have witnessed in our region and in the world. Israel has gained great benefits as a result, and the Palestinian side began to accomplish some goals, most important of which was the holding of a democratic general election for the Palestinian National Authority and its President. The process continued and endured numerous difficulties and problems, some of which were expected but which were overcome through the general commitment of both parties to fulfil their contractual obligations under the Declaration of Principles of 1993 and the Interim Agreement of 1995.

Then the current Israeli Government came to power, adopting basic political guidelines that contradicted the agreements signed, and a regression to the mentality of the occupier overwhelmed the dealings between both parties. The Government has fervently pursued the continuation of settlement activities and the Judaization of occupied East Jerusalem. The situation has thus deteriorated dramatically. The only exception to this trend of reversal of the peace process was the conclusion of the agreement on, and the redeployment in, Hebron on 17 January 1997. This agreement was the result of a long and intense American effort. It was, however, followed by a series of dangerous Israeli actions, constituting a direct threat to the peace process as a whole and to its actual continuation. The most dangerous of such actions has been the commencement of construction of a new settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim, to the south of occupied East Jerusalem, intended to absorb approximately 25,000 new colonial settlers. Prior to, and following this, there have been many other dangerous steps taken, such as the opening of the tunnel adjacent to Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the attempt to redeploy from only an additional 2 per cent of the West Bank.

Three years after the peace process began, the Palestinian people, along with the Arab people, look and see that the promised benefits of peace have not been realized, that the commitments of the interim period have not been fulfilled and, worse, that the very bases of the peace process are being eroded.

The Palestinian people look and see the drastic deterioration of their national economy and the decline in their living conditions as a result of the policies of the Israeli Government, which persist in keeping the Palestinian market hostage and in preventing any viable development of the Palestinian economy, in violation of the economic part of the agreement. They see that Government using all means, the ugliest of which is the enforcement of siege and closure, to prevent the freedom of movement of persons and goods, not only between the Palestinian territory and Israel, under the pretext of Israeli security requirements, but also within the Palestinian territory itself and between it and the outside world.

Our people look and see that the most important purposes and commitments of the transitional period have not been fulfilled. Since our people have not been able, through their national authority, to control all aspects of their lives, they continue to endure many obstacles and hardships that are imposed and intensified by the occupation authority. The most important provisions agreed upon have yet to be implemented. These include the safe passage between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the operation of the airport and the building of the port, and the return of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced since 1967. All of these provisions were to be implemented during the interim period.

Our people look and see flagrant violations of the bases and essence of the peace process. They see the continued confiscation of their land, the exploitation of their natural resources and the continuing transfer of more colonial settlers. They see daily actions, taken unilaterally and imposed by force, aimed at creating new facts on the ground, pre-empting future negotiations and predetermining the outcome. Above all, they have been subject to the humiliation of their religious beliefs and disdain for their deep national convictions by the incessant and vicious Israeli campaign to take over Jerusalem. The bulldozers of Israel, the occupying Power, began to destroy Jabal Abu Ghneim to build ugly colonial buildings, isolating the Arab quarters of Jerusalem and suffocating the eternal city of Bethlehem, as well as undermining its commemoration of the third millennium.

What, then, is left of the peace process? What is left of the mutual recognition and historic reconciliation, and how can peaceful coexistence be achieved? Not only do all of Israel's policies and actions represent violations of international law and of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the existing agreements between the two sides, they also represent the practical abandonment of the peace process and a declaration of the resumption of occupation.

Our people thus have the right to be angry. It is the right of the Arab nation to be angry. It is the right of the whole world to be angry. It is our right to oppose what is happening. It is our right to demand an immediate halt to such Israeli policies and actions and, in case of non-

compliance, to demand from the international community the imposition of punishment, albeit in initial steps. It is our right and our duty to complain to the Security Council, and it is the duty of the Security Council to respond. We will continue to do so as long as this situation continues, and we expect the Council to fulfil its responsibilities in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

It is our right and, indeed, our duty to come before the General Assembly at an emergency special session, as well as at its regular sessions, and all other international forums. The subject is of paramount importance, and it does require all of this. It is the present and the future of our people; indeed, it is the present and the future of the whole region.

It is also the right of our people to take to the streets of their besieged towns and villages to express their collective rejection of the Israeli actions and their determination to defend their land. It is regrettable that the absence of justice in our region forces us to say that it is at least their right to shout and to use their bare hands to confront the Israeli gun and tank. Those who speak of instigation to explain the reactions of the Palestinian people, and those who describe the collective expressions against Israeli actions as Palestinian violence, either do not comprehend or have bad intentions bordering on racism and hatred. It is the Israeli Government that bears total responsibility for all the suffering and for every drop of blood spilled as the people confront the occupation army because of it policies and actions.

The bombings and acts of terror, from whatever source, are a different issue. We have an established policy in this regard, which was confirmed by the strategic decision to accept the peace process. We suffered from such acts when they were committed by Israelis against our people, and they harmed our national interests when they were committed by Palestinians against Israelis. We have condemned these acts and acted against them, and we will continue to resist them. Nevertheless, we are convinced that the complete elimination of these acts requires real progress on both the political and economic levels, and not only on the security level. A culture of peace and an environment of coexistence are the antithesis of violence and terrorism, and they who make no serious contribution to the building of peace and coexistence should bear greater responsibility for the consequences.

As we witness the grave deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and in the Middle East region as a whole as a result of Israeli policies and actions, new ideas are being proposed to us which call for setting aside the existing agreements, moving to the final settlement negotiations and completing them in a specified time-frame, as though the existing agreements did not cover the final settlement negotiations. We warn of the dangers of attempting to shirk the existing contractual obligations, an attempt that we will never accept.

The right path is the implementation of the existing agreements, including, of course, the implementation of all overdue provisions and future obligations. The right path is the acceleration of the negotiations for the final settlement within the framework of the existing agreements and the reaffirmation of compliance with those agreements.

We affirm that we are still committed to the peace process and the agreements reached between the parties within its framework. We are still ready to continue implementing our obligations in this regard. We are fully aware, however, of the real threats facing the process from the Israeli side, and thwarting these threats requires extraordinary efforts by the sponsors of the peace process and by the international community as a whole.

In any case, we will not accept Israel's continuation of its illegal actions under the cover of the peace process, and if Israel continues its settlement activities and the Judaization of Jerusalem, we will have no other option but to continue with the state of political confrontation on this issue at all levels.

Since its occupation in 1967 of Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, Israel has, over the years and in a systematic and planned manner, worked to change the legal status and demographic composition of Jerusalem and the demographic composition of the occupied Palestinian territory as a whole through the colonial settlement of the land. This has been done in flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Hague Rules of 1907, and in blatant defiance of relevant Security Council resolutions. In 24 of those resolutions the Security Council affirmed the applicability of the Geneva Conventions to all the occupied territories, including Jerusalem; this was reaffirmed in many resolutions of the General Assembly and other United Nations organs. It has been done also in spite of the position taken by every one of the countries represented here against such measures.

In Jerusalem, immediately after its occupation, Israel demolished the Al-Magharba quarter in the Old City and built a Jewish quarter in its place. It arbitrarily expanded the boundaries of the municipality of East Jerusalem to more than 10 times the original area, to include lands totalling approximately 7,000 hectares. It declared the applicability of Israeli law in these lands. Later, in 1980, it declared the annexation of this land. Throughout the years, Israel has confiscated about 74 per cent of the annexed lands, in practice leaving only 14 per cent for the Palestinians. It has built nine colonial settlements and brought in 180,000 Jewish colonial settlers.

From the very start, Israel considered Palestinian Jerusalemites as foreigners and issued them so-called permanent residence permits. Those Palestinians, now numbering approximately 180,000, were compelled to pay all Israeli taxes, and received no services in return. They were systematically subjected to a slow campaign of eviction, which recently intensified, to force them to leave the city of their ancestors. In the last few years, Israel has isolated East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank despite the fact that the city is the religious, economic and cultural centre of the Palestinian people.

The Security Council rejected each of these Israeli actions, as did the General Assembly, which adopted very clear resolutions in this regard. Yet all of this has continued to take place despite the fact that there is not one single nation that has recognized Israeli sovereignty over West Jerusalem, not to mention over East Jerusalem.

All of this has taken place in the Holy City of the three monotheistic religions, the first kiblah and the third of the Holy Sanctuaries where the Prophet Mohammed ascended on his night journey, and the burial place of Jesus. Jerusalem is the crux of the question of Palestine. It is the key to peace and to war in the region.

Israel has also imposed its colonial settlement system throughout all of the occupied territories; this is a distinct system combining colonialism and apartheid-like arrangements. It is a system involving many dimensions, including the transfer of citizens of the occupying Power to the occupied territories, the illegal acquisition of lands and the theft of available natural resources, as well as the establishment of a structure of life separate from that of the indigenous population.

Throughout the years, the Israelis have built 166 colonial settlements aside from the ones built in Jerusalem, and have brought in 150,000 colonial settlers. All of this was done despite many Security Council and General Assembly resolutions opposing such acts.

All of these horrible acts have been committed against the will of the international community. Somehow Israel has succeeded in acquiring protection for itself from the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, particularly the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention. This happened despite the clearness of its goals, which have, of course, been the colonization of the land, the isolation of the rightful owners of the land in separate cantons and the prevention of the realization of the inalienable rights of our people, including their right to establish an independent State of their own. But then came the peace process and its agreements, which are binding on the two sides.

The world, which bears guilt because of its failure to halt Israeli actions, especially with regard to Jerusalem and the colonial settlements, before the peace process, should not allow this to continue, at least not in the era of the peace process.

We must succeed in achieving this, because so much is dependent upon that success. There must be collective measures within the meaning of General Assembly resolution 377 (V), which will at least guarantee the prohibition of assistance to those who violate international law, preventing them from receiving finances and rewards. The provisions of articles 1 and 148 of the Fourth Geneva Convention should be implemented. The United Nations and the Secretary-General should become engaged in observing the situation.

All of this should lead to the immediate cessation of the construction in Jabal Abu Ghneim and of all other settlement activities. It is the continuation of this illegal construction that has brought us here today, and our goal is to stop it. Our collective success in achieving this during the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly will be a success for justice and peace and an impetus to work for a better future in the Middle East.

Mr. Peleg (Israel): On 31 March, the Permanent Representative of Qatar, on behalf of the Arab Group, requested the Secretary-General to convene an emergency special session of the General Assembly in accordance with resolution 377 (V), entitled "Uniting for peace", in order to discuss the decision of the Government of Israel to provide housing for Arab and Jewish residents of Jerusalem. The letter expressed the belief that the

Government of Israel's decision was "a threat to international peace and security" (*A/ES-10/1, annex*).

The dispute between Israel and the Palestinians over the building of a new neighbourhood in Jerusalem, and any other dispute that may arise between the two sides, cannot be considered by any stretch of the imagination as a "threat to international peace and security". Furthermore, no determination has been made, during two meetings of the Security Council, that this dispute constitutes a "threat to international peace and security", nor has the Security Council called for the convening of an emergency special session of the General Assembly.

It is also worth noting that the procedure of the emergency special session has not been activated for the last 15 years. It is a relic of the cold war era, and is particularly unsuited and discordant in the context of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians.

It has now been three and a half weeks since the emergency request. I trust that this has been sufficient time for the Member States to ponder the justness and urgency of this request. Now that this emergency session has finally been convened, the question is, was this session really necessary? And how will it influence the Middle East peace process?

After all, five United Nations meetings in the last month have already dealt with the issue of housing construction in the planned Har Homa neighbourhood, two in the Security Council and three in the General Assembly. What contribution can another session make? An emergency special session would not only fail to advance mutual understanding, but it could become a source of further polarization. Unfortunately, as we have seen all too often, words can bring in their wake deeds that cannot be redressed.

This week, Israel mourns the death of Chaim Herzog, our sixth President and a former Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations. Herzog served Israel when this body passed its infamous resolution equating Zionism with racism. We had thought that those days were over, but the continuous singling out of Israel by United Nations resolutions has taken us back to that dark era.

In a world plagued by a multitude of conflicts and tragedies, where the question of the Great Lakes region is far from being resolved, and in a week when hundreds of innocent Algerians, including women and children, have been slaughtered in cold blood, must the issue of building in Jerusalem be at the top of the United Nations agenda?

This session is being convened as a cloud of uncertainty hangs over the peace process, and recommendations by Arab Foreign Ministers to freeze normalization with Israel can be heard. Although this atmosphere threatens to return us all to the era prior to the inception of the Middle East peace process, I wish to reiterate here that Israel has chosen the path of peace of its own free will. We are committed to achieving a permanent and comprehensive peace for the Middle East. The entire nation of Israel stands united in its desire for peace. This needs no proof.

From its first days in office, the Government of Israel has taken great pains to open channels of communication with the Palestinians and to develop practical methods to advance our negotiations, at first regarding implementation of the Interim Agreement, and later regarding the permanent status negotiation.

On 17 January, the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority signed the Hebron Protocol. In addition to providing for the redeployment of the Israeli Defence Forces, this agreement created timetables for the further redeployment of the Israeli Defence Forces in the West Bank and for the resumption of the permanent status negotiations. In March, the Government of Israel approved the plan for the first further redeployment in the West Bank. In addition, all female Palestinian prisoners were released from Israeli jails, and nine committees were formed to discuss all outstanding issues, including the construction of an airport and seaport in Gaza and the issue of safe passage. Further steps were undertaken to address the economic situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, including raising the number of Palestinians allowed to work in Israel to 70,000.

Our sincere hope was, and still is, that the Hebron Protocol and the subsequent steps will increase mutual trust and create an atmosphere conducive to advancing the peace process. The decision of the Government of Israel to build in Har Homa, an area within the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem, where 75 per cent of the land is Jewish-owned, does not in any way violate any of the agreements with the Palestinians, under which, pending the conclusion of the permanent status negotiations, the Palestinian Authority does not have any standing in the city of Jerusalem.

Unfortunately, the importance of every step taken by Israel in accordance with our commitments was marginalized and minimized, while vociferous demands for further Israeli concessions were increased. Instead of continuing the peace process, the Palestinians have embarked on a regional and international campaign to exert pressure and isolate Israel if we do not accept all Palestinian positions.

The choice of peace is the choice of life. The dawn of peace will be the realization of the dreams, prayers and hopes of all Israelis. For our part, Israel will spare no effort to reach a true peace for us and for our neighbours. This commitment is irreversible. It must be clear to all that the path of peace runs in only one direction. There is no turning back. There is no alternative.

There can be no meaningful peace while terrorism reigns. The Palestinians' fight against terrorism should be total, uncompromising and comprehensive. While no one can expect 100 per cent success in this fight, one can expect 100 per cent effort. The Palestinians' fight against terrorism is neither a reward nor a concession to Israel. It is the duty and obligation that they took upon themselves when they chose to embark on the path of negotiation and peace. We are hopeful that the Palestinian Authority will take the necessary measures in its fight against terrorism and return to the negotiations on the permanent status, rather than avoiding negotiations and adopting methods intended to pressure and isolate Israel.

The Palestinians have made a commitment to refrain from incitement. Unfortunately, they are not keeping this commitment. Today, from this rostrum, the Palestinian Observer said the following:

> "It is at least their right to shout and to use their bare hands to confront the Israeli gun and tank." (*supra, p. 5*)

This is a clear incitement to violence. And let me say here very clearly that the declared commitment of the Palestinians against terrorism is meaningless as long as their incitement to violence continues.

This session has been convened to discuss the issue of Jerusalem. For more than 3,000 years, Jerusalem has been the focal point of the Jewish people. Not only in ancient times when the Holy Temple stood on Mount Moriah, but during the 2,000 years of Jewish exile from the land of Israel and to this very day. Jerusalem, which has never been the capital of any nation other than Israel, will always be the heart and soul of the Jewish people.

As a native of Jerusalem, I am proud to say that Israel has never used Jerusalem's unique status and special role within Judaism to denigrate other religious interests in holy places within the city. On the contrary, it has always been Israel's policy to foster the ethnic and religious mosaic that is Jerusalem. Israel has undertaken to guarantee freedom of worship, pilgrimage and other aspects of religious life in areas under its control. This is a concrete expression of Israel's unwavering commitment to religious freedom, which was enshrined in Israel's Declaration of Independence and continues to this day.

The issue of Jerusalem will be discussed within the context of the permanent status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. We hope and trust that the development of the city of Jerusalem for the benefit of all its residents will serve as a model for a unified city that guarantees coexistence between its residents, irrespective of their religious beliefs or national origins.

The core of the peace process is direct negotiation. That is the only way to achieve progress and to secure the futures of our children. Let us all unite in promoting the peace process and turn the Middle East from a region of conflict and mistrust into a region of peace and cooperation.

The President: I call on the representative of Senegal, in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. Ka (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (*interpretation from French*): The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People deeply regrets the events that have led to the convening of this emergency special session of the General Assembly: Israel's continuing intransigence with regard to the establishment of settlements in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and the Security Council's inability to issue a pronouncement on this question, despite the grave implications for peace and security in the region and for the future of the peace process.

Five emergency special sessions of the General Assembly have had to be held over the years to deal with various distressing aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict in

the Middle East, more than for any other crisis situation that the United Nations has had to deal with since its inception. The last emergency session, the ninth, was held in 1982, at the height of the cold war. It took a whole series of meetings at that emergency special session to deal with the issues raised following increasing repression and a series of bloody incidents in the occupied territories, including those that took place at the Holy Places in Jerusalem, in addition to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the evacuation of Palestinian leaders from Beirut.

Those were some of the darkest hours in the Palestinian struggle for the exercise of legitimate national rights, including the right to self-determination and national independence. They were also times of great international tension and fears of a future lurching out of control in a region that had witnessed four destructive wars since the end of the Second World War. The firm resolutions that were adopted by the General Assembly at the time, and the frantic search for peace that followed those events, demonstrated to the intense concern of the international community and its will to spare no effort to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the conflict.

That concern still exists today, while, over the past few years, it seemed that we might achieve the dream of a new international climate of cooperation, with the resolution of long-standing regional conflicts and the unanimous desire of the peoples of the Middle East to establish an era of peace that would bring the bloodshed to an end. The mutual recognition of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1993, the signing of the Declaration of Principles and the subsequent withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and some areas of the West Bank, as well as the establishment of an elected Palestinian Authority, were historic milestones along the road to peace that the international community encouraged and nurtured with political and financial support.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was clearly delighted by those positive developments, which demonstrated to all of us that peace is possible and that serious negotiations between parties, inspired by good faith and mutual respect, can bring about a momentum for peace, even when such negotiations deal with thorny and apparently insoluble issues.

The progress made on the ground to date, such as the withdrawal of Israeli forces from parts of the occupied territories, the establishment of a Palestinian administration and the many areas of cooperation between Palestinians and Israelis, were merely a dream in 1982, if in fact anybody dared have such dreams at that time. Again, the process was very difficult; nobody thought that it would be easy to bury old grievances and conflicting interests. Today, those joint efforts make the progress reached over the past few years seem even more precious. All those important achievements have encouraged the Committee to recommend whatever steps are necessary to prevent extremists on all sides from reducing them to nothing.

It should be noted, however, that those achievements remain extremely fragile, as events have demonstrated time and again. The renewal of tensions and incidents in recent weeks should provide a constant warning and reminder that if we allow the peace process to fail, the entire region will enter a renewed cycle of violence and hatred whose effects might prove impossible to bring under control for several months or longer.

While condemning any resort to violence, particularly against civilians, the Committee wishes to recall that the peace process made progress because both parties accepted the principle of land for peace and of a negotiated solution, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and with the Declaration of Principles of 1993 and subsequent agreements. The international community is united behind this approach, which, on the one hand, recognizes the right of all States of the region, including Israel, to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries, and, on the other hand, reaffirms the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, recognizes the legitimate rights and claims of the Palestinian people and provides for negotiations between the parties on the fundamental issues of the conflict: Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, future boundaries and modalities for peaceful cooperation between the peoples of the region. The Committee is convinced that this approach, which has brought about the most significant results in the peace efforts undertaken since 1947, remains the only true means of moving forward and reinforcing the process launched in 1993.

Regrettably, the continuing military occupation by Israeli forces of large areas of Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, the presence of a large number of armed settlers in the occupied territories, the frequent roadblocks and boundary closures and the serious damage caused to the Palestinian economy — all of them unilateral measures — have a negative impact on the search for a just and peaceful settlement that respects the legitimate rights and claims of all the parties.

The Committee believes that the Israeli Government should above all recognize that the search for peace and justice in the region, with account being taken of Palestinian and Arab claims, cannot, in the final analysis, but be in Israel's interest, as long as that country truly wishes to get along with its neighbours in peaceful coexistence.

History reminds us that peace must always be based on compromise between the parties in order for it to take lasting root in the hearts and minds of people. An imposed peace always bears within it the seeds of future conflict.

It is for these reasons that Committee has strongly deplored the decisions taken by Israel that run counter to these objectives and agreements, in particular the decisions regarding Jerusalem, the settlements and the collective coercive measures, which, instead of reinforcing confidence and promoting reconciliation, create greater difficulties and feed distrust and disillusionment in the peace process.

The Committee has examined those measures in detail and has expressed its opinion, both in its report to the General Assembly and in its Bureau's press releases, as well as in my statements to the Security Council and the General Assembly on various occasions in my capacity as the Chairman of the Committee.

We also believe that the international community, expressing itself through the General Assembly, has not only the right but also the duty to remain closely involved in the various aspects of this issue for which it has a clear responsibility, until the conflict is satisfactorily resolved in accordance with United Nations resolutions and international law. Let us not forget that some 50 years ago it was the General Assembly itself that partitioned Palestine and decided to create two States, one Arab and the other Jewish, constituting an economic union. The General Assembly also declared Jerusalem international territory.

The Committee believes that the international principles embodied in the various resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council are still as valid today as they were before, even if history or force has created different realities on the ground. The fact that the parties have decided to engage in direct negotiations does nothing to invalidate these fundamental principles, nor does it negate the international community's obligation to take an interest in the situation in Palestine.

These are the reasons why the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has supported the convening of this emergency special session. The Committee sincerely hopes that this session will succeed in bringing an end to the settlement policy and to the other unilateral measures taken by the occupying Power. It especially hopes that it will restore confidence in the region and a climate conducive to the speedy resumption of the negotiations and the peace process, in the interest of peace and mutual understanding among all the peoples of the region.

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is a pleasure for me to express on behalf of the Group of Arab States at the United Nations our profound appreciation to those States that quickly supported the Group's request to convene a special emergency session of the General Assembly within the framework of resolution 377 (V), entitled "Uniting for peace". Without that support it would not have been possible for us to express in the General Assembly Hall the position of the international community in the face of the threats to the peace process in the Middle East resulting from the policies of the Israeli Government.

The Group of Arab States requested this session in order for the General Assembly to examine the Israeli settlement policies in occupied Palestinian territories, especially in East Jerusalem, where the Israeli Government has begun the construction of 6,500 housing units in the district of Jabal Abu Ghneim.

In the framework of the resolution entitled "Uniting for peace" we were compelled to request that this subject be considered in the General Assembly, as the Security Council twice found it impossible to reach a decision that would dissuade and prevent the Israeli Government from taking these measures that undermine the very foundations of the peace process.

The Group of Arab States asked that this session be held following a series of resolutions and decisions adopted by the Organization of the Islamic Conference during the special summit held in Islamabad; by the Committee on Jerusalem, which met in Rabat and was presided over by His Majesty King Hassan II; by the most recent meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which was held in Riyadh; by the meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the League of Arab States, which was held in Cairo; and by the meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Non-Aligned Movement, which was held in New Delhi.

Therefore, the emergency special session being held today by the General Assembly in fact demonstrates the deep concern, not only of the Palestinian people, but of all States that are concerned about the success of the peace process in the Middle East and those States and organizations that hope that this process will have positive results for peace and security in the region and in the world.

This session is being held after the adoption of resolution 51/223 by the General Assembly on 13 March 1997. That resolution warns Israel against continuing the establishment of settlements at Jabal Abu Ghneim. Most of the States that spoke during that meeting unreservedly condemned the settlement activities and demanded that the Israeli Government put an immediate end to its illegal policies and measures in the city of Jerusalem. The same States expressed the hope that the Security Council, the body entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, would adopt a resolution compelling Israel to put an end to its plans in that city, which is a sacred symbol for all Arab and Muslim peoples.

The convening of this session, therefore, has serious implications for the peace process. The Arabs, who have irreversibly chosen peace as their option and have made every effort to bring this choice to fruition, reiterate that the Arab Ummah is confronting Israel's defiance with the full support of all the member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Arab Group reiterates also that when the Arab nation — the Arab Ummah — at its June 1996 Cairo Summit decided to choose peace as its strategy, it did so in the light of its unswerving faith in the legitimacy of Arab rights in Palestine, in the Arab Syrian Golan and in southern Lebanon. At that Summit, the Arab leaders reaffirmed that any non-compliance by Israel with its commitments, which form the basis of the peace process, would be a blow to that process whose inevitable repercussions would cause the cycle of tension and violence in the region to resume. The Arab States would then be obliged to reconsider all the steps taken in the direction of Israel, and the Israeli Government would bear full responsibility for the resulting situation.

To safeguard the peace process so that it can achieve its objectives as agreed by the parties concerned and by the international community, a climate of confidence and security must prevail. In addition, certain commitments and measures must be taken that contribute to trust and to communication. These commitments and measures must be mutual and must ensure the transparency of intentions and of policies.

Nonetheless, Israel's policy of building settlements in occupied East Jerusalem as well as in the other occupied territories contravenes all the agreements concluded by the parties concerned and has contributed to a loss of confidence. The credibility of the Israeli approach to a just and lasting peace has suffered, which can lead only to heightened tension and increased violence. If Israel truly wishes to live in security with the Palestinians, it must stop building settlements in East Jerusalem and in all of the other occupied territories, continue the peace negotiations, and allow the Palestinians to build their state, with Jerusalem as its capital.

If Israel wants its borders with Syria to be secure, it must withdraw from all the territories of the occupied Golan. If it wants its borders with Lebanon to be secure, it must withdraw from southern Lebanon. The Israeli Government must understand that its refusal to implement Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) jeopardizes the security of the entire region. It must understand that progress in the peace process depends on Israel's respect for the commitments undertaken and agreed to by the parties. For the peace process to move ahead, Israel must also put an end to its policy of building settlements in East Jerusalem and in all the occupied territories.

It is our hope that this emergency special session will reaffirm the following principles and demands:

First, an immediate and complete halt to the building of the Jabal Abu Ghneim settlement in the southern part of occupied East Jerusalem, as well as all Israeli settlement-building activities. Second, a reaffirmation that all legislative and administrative measures, as well as those measures taken by Israel as an occupying Power, that aim to change the status of Jerusalem are null and void. Third, a request to the parties that are signatories to the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 that they demand that Israel implement the provisions of article I of that Convention, since Israel is the occupying Power of the occupied territories. Fourth, a reaffirmation that the measures taken by Israel in the territories occupied since 1967 are null and void.

Fifth, the importance of the unity of all the occupied Palestinian territories should be reaffirmed, as should the

freedom of movement of persons and goods, and restrictions on movement from East Jerusalem and towards the city should be eliminated. Sixth, a recommendation should be issued to States to refrain from providing assistance to Israeli public and private institutions conducting settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, because this represents a violation of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and of the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. And seventh, there should be a reaffirmation of the importance of the full implementation of the agreements concluded among the parties and an invitation to the sponsors of the peace process, all parties concerned and the international community to make every effort to relaunch the peace process on all its tracks.

My delegation, on behalf of the Arab Group, invites all Member States to take a stand for peace and ensure that the Israeli Government hears the voice of justice. They can do so by demanding that Israel immediately stop destroying the foundations of peace in the Middle East and that it work together, in good faith, with the other countries of the region to build a genuine peace. For this to become reality, positive action must be taken so that everyone can live in conditions of stability. This means refraining from negative actions that create insecurity and distrust, which bring us back to what should be ancient history.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Qatar) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation, as Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of March, had the honour to request the convening of this emergency special session of the General Assembly. In this connection, allow me to express to you, Mr. President, our thanks and appreciation for the convening of this session. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Governments and delegations that supported my country's request to hold this emergency special session. Those who believe that it is not within the United Nations competence to deal with the question of the Middle East, and especially with the explosive situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and the serious situation in Muslim Arab Jerusalem, are trying to forget that the State of Israel was created by this international Organization. This contradiction shows intransigence. This international Organization was created expressly to deal with international issues and to maintain international peace and security.

We would not have called for the convening of an emergency special session of the General Assembly if the Security Council had been able to shoulder its responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations, which entrusted it with the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. However, because of the unfair use of the veto by one of the permanent members of the Security Council, the Council was twice prevented from discharging its responsibilities and duties. That member is a country that was regarded as a fair mediator, but after what happened in the Security Council, the adjective "fair" has become difficult to accept. The unfair use of the veto encouraged the Israeli Government, the occupying Power, to continue its defiance of the international community and to start, on 18 March, to implement its settlement plan in Jabal Abu Ghneim and occupied Muslim Jerusalem. This act jeopardized the peace process in the Middle East, and the international community should deal with this situation as fast as possible. It should oblige the Israeli Government to desist from these irresponsible acts, which run counter to logic, rights and justice.

Thus, we were led to request the convening of this emergency special session on the basis of General Assembly resolution 377 (V) of 3 November 1950, entitled "Uniting for peace". Peace is the noble objective for which we should all work. Without peace no one will be secure. Without peace there will be no cooperation or peace between the countries of the region. The Israeli policy regarding settlements is a clear and flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 1949, as well as of The Hague Rules of 1907. It also represents a serious violation of the resolutions of the United Nations and contravenes the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, particularly resolutions 242 (1967) and 252 (1968). These resolutions called upon Israel to withdraw from all occupied Arab territories, including Holy Jerusalem, and declared null and void all administrative measures and other measures taken by Israel relating to the confiscation of land and property, as well as any act that might change the situation in the occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem. In addition, it should be recalled that the Security Council adopted resolution 446 (1979), which determined that the Israeli settlement policy in the occupied Arab territories since 1967, including Jerusalem, had no legal validity and constituted a serious obstruction to achieving peace in the Middle East. Resolution 476 (1980) reconfirms that the imposition of Israeli rule over the Holy City of Jerusalem and actions intended to alter its character and status violate international law.

I do not want to review here all the resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the

international community concerning the occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem. These resolutions represent in their totality a condemnation of the wrongful Israeli settlement policy in the occupied Arab territories, which violates international legitimacy.

As we all know, Jerusalem is a Holy City not only for the Arabs, be they Muslims or Christians: it is a Holy City for more than a billion Muslims, who view it in a special way. Whatever the circumstances, they will not allow any Israeli Government to violate their rights to this city. Jerusalem represents either war or peace, either a new world order in which there are opportunities for justice, or a world based on supremacy and intransigence — which should be combated.

My previous comments lead me to recall that the conditions under which the Israeli occupation was acceptable belong to the distant past. Also past is the era during which some countries and peoples believed they were called to impose their civilizations on others. The conscience of the world no longer accepts such a pasture. Now on the verge of the twenty-first century we cannot tolerate injustice based on claims of supremacy and special rights that run counter to justice and to international laws and norms.

The international community must impose its will by stopping the Government of Israel and by preventing Israel's defiance of international will and its violation of international law. The international community must stop Israel from jeopardizing the peace process in the Middle East. The State of Qatar appeals to the international community to compel Israel, the Power occupying Arab territories, to desist immediately from building settlements in Jabal Abu Ghneim and Arab Muslim Jerusalem and to avoid imposing on the peoples of the region the consequences of Israel's foolish policy which, if continued, would bring an end to the peace process and throw the Middle East region back into violence and chaos.

> They plot and plan,
> And God too plans,
> But the best of planners
> Is God. *(The Holy Koran, VIII:30)*

Mr. Sriwidjaja (Indonesia): Fifteen years have elapsed since the General Assembly last met in emergency special session. In 1982, the subject was the Israeli decision to annex the occupied Syrian Golan. Today, in 1997, it is Israel's commencement of the construction of a new settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim to the south of East Jerusalem. It is poignant to note that both pertain to the situation in the occupied Arab territories.

Yet much has transpired in the intervening period. The end of the cold war has provided a new source of hope for a more peaceful and tolerant world, and one which is also more equitable. This general sense of optimism was also manifested in relation to developments in the Middle East. The peace process initiated in 1993 promised to bring to an end the long suffering of the Palestinian people. The international community witnessed and gave encouragement to the achievement of historic milestones in the journey towards peace in the Middle East. We laud the peacemakers for their foresight and wisdom in taking crucial initial steps for the cause of peace, and for their perseverance in the face of formidable obstacles. During this period of high hopes and expectations, and in recognition of the need for economic and social development if sustained peace is to prevail, our attention has been focused on efforts at improving Palestinian living conditions. Thus, in the Middle East, as in the global milieu, a critical turning point appeared to have been reached.

Despite these achievements, however, the General Assembly is once again meeting in emergency special session, and again the issue before it is the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. Our very deliberations today are a regrettable reminder of the persistence of the policies and practices of the past. Within the Security Council, the end of the cold war was to have heralded a new era, one marked by painstaking and patient efforts at reaching consensus. Accordingly, the use of veto had declined. At the same time, we cannot fail to note with profound dismay and disappointment that in less than two years the veto was cast on three occasions in relation to the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, always by the same permanent member of the Council, in utter disregard of the provocative actions of Israel. Indeed, in a span of less than two weeks, two vetoes were cast last month. Clearly, therefore, insofar as the situation in the occupied Arab Palestinian territory is concerned, the much-heralded positive impact of the changes in the international landscape in the aftermath of the cold war is yet to be fully realized.

Above all, notwithstanding the historic developments over the past four years, it is increasingly difficult to reconcile Israel's professed commitment to the peace process with its actions and deeds. It had been our earnest hope that every gesture towards peace by the Palestinians would be reciprocated by Israel. Instead, we

have witnessed methodical and systematic violations of the letter and the spirit of the Declaration of Principles and an accentuation of the policy of *fait accompli*. The commencement of the building of a new settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim is not an isolated event. It is but a link in a long chain of illegal acts committed against the Arab nation. It follows the opening of the tunnel located within Al-Haram Al-Sharif, and therefore forms a part of concerted efforts to isolate East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. In particular, there can be no doubt that the Israeli action constitutes a flagrant violation of resolutions of this body and of the Security Council, in particular Council resolutions 242 (1967), 252 (1968) and 338 (1973), which, *inter alia*, emphasize the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and consider all measures and actions taken by Israel which seek to change the legal status of Jerusalem as null and void. Moreover, this is an act which is in breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and of other rules of international law. And it is one which violates the letter and the spirit of the Declaration of Principles and the subsequent agreements, not least because it seeks to preempt the outcome of the permanent status negotiations by changing the legal status and demographic composition of Jerusalem. As such, it threatens to undermine the peace process.

Through its actions, Israel seems determined to intimidate and humiliate the Palestinians in a vain attempt to consign them to perpetual subjugation and occupation. Israel is oblivious to the risk that the mutual trust and confidence which have painstakingly been built over the past four years would dissipate as a consequence of its actions. And it is clearly oblivious also to the danger that its provocative policies would lead to further bloodshed and deal an irrecoverable blow to the endeavours for peace. Indeed, Israel has become adept at attributing to others the deterioration of the situation in the Middle East, never acknowledging that its own actions have directly contributed to this grave state of affairs.

Mr. Agathocleous (Cyprus), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Israel cannot persist in assuming that its unlawful acts are committed in a vacuum, without serious repercussions for overall peace in the region. It cannot shirk its responsibility for the consequences emanating from its ill-conceived policies and practices. Israel cannot be exempted from the principles of international law and the provisions of the United Nations Charter. It cannot base its existence and security on the denial of the Palestinians' right to self-determination. And Israel cannot claim that the current difficulties in the peace process should be addressed strictly on a bilateral Israeli-Palestinian basis. Israel's unilateral actions in breach of the agreements already reached hardly lend credibility to its professed commitment to bilateral talks. Clearly, this constitutes nothing more than an attempt to weaken the cause of the Palestinians by isolating them from the overwhelming support of their position, which is based on international legitimacy.

It is in this context, and in view of the repeated failure of the Security Council to shoulder its Charter-mandated responsibilities and duties for the maintenance of international peace and security as they pertain to the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, that my delegation fully supports the convening of the current emergency special session of the General Assembly in accordance with resolution 377 (V), entitled "Uniting for peace".

This emergency special session offers the opportunity to send yet another signal of the international community's categorical rejection of the Israeli action in East Jerusalem, and of its continued support of the peace process, to add to the overwhelming and decisive endorsement which made possible the adoption of resolution 51/223 last month. It reflects our shared determination to ensure that the Middle East peace process is not jeopardized by unilateral Israeli actions. And it constitutes an undeniable testimony to the recognition by the Assembly of its historic and permanent responsibility on the question of Palestine.

In this regard, the General Assembly must pronounce itself unequivocally and demand that Israel immediately cease its construction of a new settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim and refrain from undertaking further activities that are incompatible with and detrimental to the peace process. We must collectively act to break the vicious cycle of crisis, tensions and violence caused by Israeli actions. The draft resolution which is to be placed before this Assembly encapsulates the minimum that must be complied with by Israel. The Indonesian delegation therefore fully supports its adoption.

In closing, I should like to reiterate that the settlement of the question of Palestine, through the attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, is a prerequisite for achieving a durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. In the attainment of this objective, the Palestinian people can always count on our support. For peace, justice and

stability to prevail in the Middle East, the United Nations must ensure the unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan and Lebanon, through the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Today we gather once again as innocent young Palestinian lives are being cruelly cut short in their prime, and many others are left scarred to live in hatred of their oppressors. The recent tragic events in Palestine raise the spectre of another *intifadah*. Surely this body, as it meets today, would not like to witness once more the uninterrupted flow of innocent blood on the soil of Palestine.

The State of Israel, even as we deliberate here, continues with its settlement plan in Jabal Abu Ghneim in East Jerusalem oblivious to the sensitivities of the Palestinian people and of the international community. Israel's dogged policy of construction of settlements constitutes a flagrant violation of resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 252 (1968) and 338 (1973), which clearly affirm, among other things, the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and consider all actions and measures by Israel to change the legal status of Jerusalem as illegal and invalid.

The purpose and intention of the settlements is clear to all. They are aimed at changing the area's demography by making the Palestinians a minority in their own homeland, and in turn changing the legal and physical character of the Holy City of Jerusalem. This is an attempt to fulfil Israel's objective of establishing Jerusalem as its capital. But this is a dream which is unacceptable, for Jerusalem is a city of great spiritual significance to the world's three great religions. The question of the status of Jerusalem therefore cannot be settled by unilateral pre-emptive actions, but must be resolved through negotiations inspired by the spirit of conciliation and understanding.

The sacrifice and untold sufferings of the Palestinian people for over 50 long years are well known. Yet even at this critical juncture in the peace process, the Palestinians have demonstrated as much restraint as possible under the harshest and most treacherous circumstances. Their appeal to the Security Council for firm action has been in vain. The daily loss of lives and flow of innocent blood have failed even to soften the hardened hearts of those who have the ability to resolve the present tragedy. Indeed, the Security Council's credibility has been compromised. The failure of the Security Council has encouraged Israel to intensify its unilateral action. In a premeditated manner, Israel continues to paralyse and strangle the peace process with the intention of perpetually subjugating the Palestinian people. By any standard, these actions not only violate the terms of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the provisions of the Hague Convention of 1907 applicable to occupied territories, but also the letter and spirit of the 1993 Declaration of Principles and all subsequent agreements arrived at between the parties involved.

It is therefore a timely and an opportune moment to hold this emergency special session of the General Assembly, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 377 (V), entitled "Uniting for peace", to deliberate on this crucial issue and all its essential aspects. The draft resolution before us today on "Illegal Israeli Actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory" is an all-inclusive one which has taken into consideration the sad realities and events of the time. Surely the resolution reflects the conscience of the world's nations. It calls, *inter alia*, for a halt to the construction of the settlements in Jabal Abu Ghneim; stresses the need to preserve the territorial integrity of all occupied Palestinian territory, to guarantee freedom of movement for Palestinians within and outside their territory and to remove all restrictions on the movements of Palestinian people in East Jerusalem; and demands that Israel accept the *de jure* applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions, in accordance with Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations.

It is therefore only natural that Bangladesh should support the draft resolution and hope for its adoption at the emergency special session of the General Assembly by an overwhelming majority.

Bangladesh firmly believes that the attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the settlement of the question of Palestine is essential for achievement of a durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Therefore, the participation of Palestinians as equal partners in any negotiations, with due cognizance of their rights and sensitivities, is imperative for any meaningful and realistic progress.

Bangladesh felt optimistic when the Madrid peace process in 1991 prompted the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations to move slowly yet successfully in the right direction. Now, like a bolt from the blue, comes Israel's

sudden decision to construct settlements, thus destroying all that was so assiduously achieved in recent years and indicating a return once again to the old legacy of enmity and mistrust. Bangladesh believes that if this present trend continues, peace in that region will indeed remain an elusive dream.

Despite the present tragic situation, Bangladesh will continue, as in the past, to support the just and courageous struggle of the Palestinians as they strive to attain their own homeland of Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital. Bangladesh will also continue to stand by its declared position, which calls for Israel to withdraw from all Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967.

I would like to conclude by stressing again the importance of this emergency special session of the General Assembly. Our support for the draft resolution will reflect the international community's aversion to the actions of one particular State in the region destroying all the years of hard work and negotiations. Our firm stand will surely tell Israel that the world community as a whole cannot be wrong when it demands an immediate halt to its settlement activities. Only such action can stop the senseless bloodshed and deaths in the troubled region. Israel must sincerely believe in a vision of peace and a prosperous future for all peoples in the region. As the stronger force, it must display graciousness and generosity by extending a hand of genuine friendship to the Palestinians, thereby giving them a sense of confidence, trust and understanding, which are the very essence of peace.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The General Assembly is meeting today in an emergency special session, in accordance with the provisions of the resolution entitled "Uniting for peace", to consider the illegal actions taken by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem. The meeting is taking place in the wake of the Security Council's failure, on two occasions within a 15-day period, to adopt a resolution calling upon Israel to halt construction on the Jabal Abu Ghneim settlement to the south of East Jerusalem and to desist from settlement activities in general.

I should like to point out that General Assembly resolution 377 (V) of 1950 affirms several important principles, foremost among which is the responsibility borne by the General Assembly for dealing with any threat to international peace and security if the Security Council fails to discharge its responsibilities in this regard. The resolution states:

(spoke in English)

> "the General Assembly shall consider the matter immediately — with a view to making appropriate recommendations to Members for collective measures". *(resolution 377 (V), part A, para. 1)*

(spoke in Arabic)

The provisions of this resolution were included in rules 8 (b) and 9 (b) of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. As an integral part of the rules of procedure, the provisions have thereby become binding on all of us.

The United Nations and its various principal bodies, in particular the General Assembly, have a major responsibility with regard to the question of Palestine in all its aspects and various stages. This has been the case since the United Kingdom brought the matter before the General Assembly on 1 April 1947, and it will continue to be the case until the international community witnesses the just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of this question. That responsibility will remain. The States Members of the United Nations therefore bear a collective responsibility to address any matter that could be deemed to be a threat to peace and security in any part of the world, including the Middle East.

In my capacity as representative of Egypt, it may be appropriate for me to recall that the first emergency special session of the General Assembly was convened in November 1956. It adopted historic resolutions on the need for the withdrawal of the forces of aggression from Egyptian territories. It established the first peacekeeping force, called the United Nations Emergency Force. The General Assembly thereby established the rules for peacekeeping operations, which are now the main instrument of international peace and security. The General Assembly established an important principle at that time: the requirement for the withdrawal of military forces from occupied territories.

I should like now to deal with a question that has been repeated recently: why the United Nations has had recourse to consider the question of Israeli settlement policy in the occupied Palestinian territories four times in less than two months. There are two aspects to the answer to this question. As I have already made clear, the first relates to the responsibility of the United Nations for dealing with the question of Palestine in all its aspects and all its stages. The second relates to the gravity of the situation, as illustrated by the resumption of Israeli

settlement activity in the occupied territories, undoubtedly constituting a strong, if not a mortal, blow by the current Israeli Government to Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and to the principle of land for peace, which is based on the provisions of that resolution. I should like to reaffirm my belief that the policy of settlement will find no legitimate support in any forum. I should also like to point out that the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which represents the parliaments of the entire world, adopted, on 14 April 1997, a resolution that

(spoke in English)

> "Calls upon the Israeli authorities to refrain from all actions or measures, including settlement activities, which alter the facts on the ground, pre-empting the final status negotiations, and have negative implications for the Middle East peace process".

(spoke in Arabic)

The policy of settlement confers no legal rights on the party claiming the territory, because it runs counter to the rules of international law and the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which prohibits the occupying Power from transferring citizens to settle the territories under its occupation. The settlement of Jabal Abu Ghneim, where Israel has begun construction work, is in a vital location that separates the city of Bethlehem, which is under the Palestinian Authority, from East Jerusalem, which was occupied by Israel in 1967. This settlement is the last link in a chain of Israeli settlements that ring East Jerusalem, serving to isolate it from the rest of the Palestinian territories occupied since that time.

This action not only expropriates the Palestinian right to East Jerusalem, but prejudges the result of negotiations on the final fate of Jerusalem, which the two parties have agreed will be one of the issues to be discussed in final status negotiations. Furthermore, the policy of the current Israeli Government, which is trying to impose a *fait accompli* on the ground, should be rejected. It is neither just nor fair to ask the Palestinian party to sit at the negotiating table and attempt to change the new facts on the ground that Israel has created by force.

We are not dealing here with a difference between two parties on the interpretation of the provisions of agreements concluded between them, and it cannot therefore be said that the way to settle such a difference is at a bilateral negotiating table, as Israel is demanding. The situation is indeed very grave, as it pertains to a party's unilateral abrogation of the agreements previously reached, thereby leaving the other party no choice but to capitulate or to resort to the relevant organs of the United Nations. This is what Palestine has done.

The current Israeli Government has persisted since last year in taking a number of provocative actions in Jerusalem. This can only be interpreted as complete disregard for the agreement reached in Oslo between the Palestinian and Israeli sides, which stated that the subject of Jerusalem would form part of the final status negotiations. These actions have included the demolition of the building of the Burj al Laqlaq society for social services in Jerusalem last August, the opening of the tunnel under the Western Wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque for the sake of tourism, the declaration to establish a Jewish settlement within the original municipal boundaries of East Jerusalem in the Ras al-Amud quarter and, finally, the establishment of the Jabal Abu Ghneim settlement south of East Jerusalem. This is in addition to the economic blockade, closures and other provocative actions taken under the pretext of security, sometimes without anyone even bothering to provide an explanation. The Israeli Government has added to this the declaration of its tiny withdrawal from only 2 per cent of the territory of the West Bank, which was to have taken place in three stages until the middle of next year.

These actions should not be viewed as an attempt by Israel to strengthen its negotiating position. They are much more grave than that. They cast doubt on the credibility of Israel's intentions regarding peace. These actions benefit no one but the enemies of peace, who are waiting for an opportunity to strike at the very basis of the peace process.

In this regard, I received a few days ago an important report issued this month, which was prepared by Bet Salem — the Israeli Information Centre on Human Rights in the Occupied Territories — and Hamoked — the Centre for the Defense of the Individual Person — two Israeli non-governmental organizations. The report is entitled *The Quiet Deportation*. It deals with Israel's policy for the deportation of Palestinian citizens from East Jerusalem.

Allow me to quote some of the paragraphs from the report dealing with Israeli actions aimed at forcing the Palestinian people to leave East Jerusalem. I would like to stress that this report was issued by Israeli, not Arab or Palestinian, organizations. It says,

(spoke in English)

> "Viewing East Jerusalem Palestinian residents as foreigners who entered Israel is perplexing, since it was Israel that entered East Jerusalem in 1967, since the annexation of East Jerusalem. The Israeli Government has adopted a policy of systematic and deliberate discrimination against the Palestinian population in Jerusalem in all matters relating to land expropriation, planning and building".

(spoke in Arabic)

In connection with the restrictions faced by the Palestinians with regard to construction, the report goes on to say,

(spoke in English)

> "Most of the lands expropriated since 1967 were privately owned by Arabs. Some 38,500 housing unite were built on this land for the Jewish population, but not one housing unit for Palestinians. Some 64,870 dwellings, constituting some 88 per cent of all housing units, were built for the Jewish population, about one half of them by public construction, while 12 per cent of all the housing units were built for the Palestinian population".

(spoke in Arabic)

The Israeli report concludes as follows:

(spoke in English)

> "The Israeli authorities' planning and building policy in East Jerusalem leaves the Palestinian residents no alternative other than to move outside the municipal borders".

(spoke in Arabic)

It is appropriate here to point out that the United Nations has an official presence in Jerusalem through the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), which has been discharging an important responsibility since 1948. In resolution 73 (1949) the Security Council gave a mandate for its continued operations. I believe it is important for all of us to demand the continued presence of UNTSO in order to monitor the events taking place in Jerusalem.

The peace process in the Middle East faces real difficulties that threaten to bring it to a halt. The current Israeli Government bears complete responsibility for that because of its lack of respect for established international norms, its disregard of the demands of the Arab and Palestinian side and its insistence on implementing arrangements according to its own vision, arrangements that cannot in any way, shape or form rise to the level of the just, lasting and comprehensive peace in our region, the achievement of which is the aspiration of the Arab world and the international community as a whole.

A just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East cannot be established on the basis of the vision of only one party. It must be based on the conciliation of the visions of the two partners in the peace process, and it must be based clearly on agreements reached since the Madrid Conference. This can take place only through the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the formula of land for peace.

For Israel to attempt to alter the framework of peace, shirk the agreements previously reached and replace the formula of land for peace solely on the flimsy pretext of achieving Israeli security is unacceptable, not only because it is a regression from an international commitment, but also because real and genuine security will not be achieved for Israel, the Palestinians or the States of the region until a comprehensive peace is established. Genuine security will continue to be an elusive dream until peace is established in the region.

Egypt started the peace process in the region 20 years ago, investing much effort and resources in the hope of achieving a just and lasting peace in the region. Egypt has always played an active and central role for the achievement of this objective, without renouncing its Arab responsibilities. Over the last few months President Mubarak has repeatedly warned of the results and repercussions of the Israeli policies. Egypt has pointed out to the Israeli side, at all meetings and at all levels, that the current policy of the Government of Israel cannot but fuel extremism and violence because it strikes at the basis of peace and tramples upon the legitimate aspirations and ambitions of the Palestinian and Arab peoples. Violence is the natural result of frustration, and it cannot be stopped in isolation from the causes that have led to it.

The General Assembly is called upon today to consider the necessary measures to deal with the illegal

Israeli policies in all the occupied territories. We call upon the Member States to stand shoulder to shoulder to save peace and to reactivate the peace process on all tracks in order to save the future of the Middle East from a grim fate. We hope that the draft resolution before the emergency special session will constitute a clear message to the Israeli Government as to the solidarity of the international community and the demand for an immediate cessation of the building of settlements in the occupied territories, the territorial integrity of which must be respected by Israel.

I would like to refer in particular to operative paragraph 7 of the draft resolution, calling for the cessation of all support for and assistance to the illegal activities carried out by Israel in the occupied territories, particularly the settlement activities.

I call upon all States to shoulder their responsibility to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and its annexes, as set out in the draft resolution. This is consistent with the obligations assumed by these States when they became parties to that Convention.

I appeal from this rostrum to all States to support the draft resolution, which is a realistic and balanced one. By so doing, they will uphold the important principles contained in the draft; they will express their support for international legitimacy; and they will help safeguard peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The convening of this emergency special session of the General Assembly on the basis of unity for peace is a rare, even exceptional event in the history of the Organization. It shows the extent of the impasse facing States when they find all other avenues blocked for dealing with a situation that is adversely affecting international peace and security.

The international community had no choice but to take this step when Israel defied repeated international condemnation of its settlement policy in the occupied Palestinian territories, and in Jerusalem in particular. Israel turned a deaf ear to the appeals asking it to cease contravening agreements and international conventions. To make matters worse, the Israeli Government has persisted in defying the international community by continuing to build settlements in Jabal Abu Ghneim and other regions, even after condemnation by the international community last March, thereby disregarding international law and contravening the various resolutions and agreements that had been entered into.

Everyone is aware of the role that the General Assembly has played since its creation in the evolution of the question of Palestine. It was the Assembly, by its resolution 181 (II), of 29 November 1947, that partitioned Palestine into two States: the Palestinian state and Israel. The General Assembly must persist in its efforts until the other state — the state of Palestine — which has still not seen the light of day, is created. The Assembly would thus finally be discharging its duties towards this people, who have suffered the greatest tragedy of the twentieth century and are still sacrificing themselves to obtain their legitimate right to build an independent state, with Jerusalem as its capital.

The building by Israel of a settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim, in East Jerusalem, contravenes the fourth Geneva Convention; the letter and spirit of the Oslo, Cairo and Washington agreements; and Security Council resolution 242 (1967), particularly the paragraph relating to the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force.

Israel has acted in total defiance of the agreements entered into in the framework of the Madrid Conference and of the principles underlying the peace process. This represents a failure to abide by the commitments entered into and by the terms set by the United States as guarantor, as well as a way of defying the principle of land for peace. It is clear that Israel's decision to continue the illegal building of this settlement is aimed at changing the demographic composition of the Holy City in order to impose a *fait accompli*, thus preventing an appropriate solution to this delicate question. There is no doubt that the question of Jerusalem is the touchstone of the whole question of Palestine. Any hope for a just and lasting settlement necessarily requires the acceptance of the right of the Palestinian people to have Jerusalem as the capital of their independent state, because Jerusalem is the third Holy City, after Makkah and Al-Madina.

Jerusalem also has a special meaning for Christians, who feel that the construction of this new settlement represents an attempt to separate Jerusalem from Bethlehem, the cradle of Christ, and that it will force Arabs to emigrate. His Holiness Pope John Paul II took a clear-cut stand on this latest Israeli decision: he opposed this action, which would adversely affect the Christian world. Israel cannot remain unmoved by the

sentiments of both Muslims and Christians towards the future of Jerusalem.

We are at a crossroads today. Israel can either go back on its decision to separate Jerusalem from the other territories occupied since 1967, and sincerely and in good faith live up to its commitments to refrain from imposing a *fait accompli;* or it can accept responsibility for jeopardizing the peace process. Its futile pretexts aimed at changing the facts on the ground, whose goal is to thwart the final status negotiations, are not convincing.

The Organization must, under these circumstances, follow most attentively the negotiating process and rectify its course according to need. Even if the intentions to respect commitments are sincere, what to make of actions that contravene agreements and of realities that go against the objectives sought? Is it not then the Organization's duty to make its position clear, to rectify policies and to see to it that international agreements and conventions are implemented, particularly the fourth Geneva Convention, the Hague Convention, the Declaration of Principles and all peace agreements concluded between Israel and Palestine?

The striking inequity in the balance of power requires that the international community ensure that international legality is respected. People must not be allowed to act as they please, with the strong oppressing the weak without being held responsible. Thus the General Assembly must adopt a resolution demanding that Israel cease building the new settlement, put an end to its practices and measures aimed at bypassing the final negotiations, and respect its commitments as well as agreements and international conventions.

Since the very beginning of the peace process, Tunisia has supported the principles underlying the Madrid Conference, namely the principle of land for peace. We have striven to build a just and lasting peace on the basis of international law and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, particularly resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978) and 478 (1980).

The initiatives and actions of the Tunisian Government have always been dictated by this vision, which is shared by other members of the international community, because Tunisia feels that peace based on justice is the only way that trust will prevail over fear, and security over violence. It is the only means of ensuring genuine cooperation between the peoples and States of the region so that they can progress. We must therefore bear in mind these principles and objectives and try to ensure the implementation of agreements entered into, so that the peace process does not stumble or falter. Israel is attempting to impose a different status quo, the only effects of which would be a resurgence of violence and the loss of all hopes for achieving peace, security and stability in that sensitive region of the world.

The delicate situation of the peace process at present means that the sponsors of the Madrid Peace Conference should take a firm stance and send an unequivocal message to Israel, firmly calling upon it to respect completely the requirements for a just and secure peace. Such a peace requires genuine mutual recognition between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples on the basis of dignity, equality and reciprocal respect.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I would like at the outset to join those who preceded me in thanking the Secretary-General for his prompt response to the desire of the majority of the Member States and for convening this emergency special session of the General Assembly, at the request of the Arab Group, to discuss the serious situation that has prevailed recently in the Middle East in general and in the city of Jerusalem in particular.

No one disputes that the peace process in the Middle East is now at a serious stage that jeopardizes its very basis and future. The real sources of this situation are no secret to anyone. The most important of them is the policy adopted by the present Israeli Administration in dealing with the peace process in general. In fact, since that Administration came to power in Israel, it has been creating obstacles to the peace process. These have included its non-compliance with previous commitments: first and foremost the agreements concluded with the Palestinian side and, secondly, with those concluded with the other parties. This policy threatens the fundamental basis — especially the principle of land for peace — upon which the peace process has been built since its inception at the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991 and thwarts the positive steps that followed, which were a source of hope and optimism for a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

What is taking place now in the eastern sector of occupied Jerusalem is clear evidence of this policy. The Israeli project to construct a new settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim is a flagrant violation of the principles and objectives of the peace process. It abrogates a previous agreement with the Palestinian party, which calls for non-

interference with the demographic composition of Jerusalem until an agreement concerning it is reached during the final status negotiations regarding the occupied Palestinian territories.

Hence, the whole world, even the friends of the Israeli Administration, rejected and condemned the Israeli measures. The international community regarded the violations of the spirit of the peace process committed by that Administration as detrimental to that process, undermining all the bridges of trust and optimism that had been painstakingly built during the last few years.

The General Assembly discussed this issue previously during its resumed session in the middle of last month. At that time a resolution was adopted. It called upon Israel to desist from its position, which impedes the peace process, and to refrain from its continued policy of establishing settlements in occupied Arab territories, starting with the current project in East Jerusalem. Despite the Security Council's failure to take a firm stand regarding the issue of Jerusalem, statements made in the Council clearly indicated that there is near-consensus in the international community on the need to require the Israeli Administration to halt its settlement practices — notably the Jabal Abu Ghneim project — and to comply with the resolutions of international legitimacy, especially resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and, in particular, 476 (1980), which provides that the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem must not be altered, since it is an occupied territory, and that all measures taken contrary to this ruling are null and void.

Given Israel's intransigence, its persistent non-compliance with all these resolutions, its disregard of all appeals and its continued defiance of international world opinion, Algeria joins the majority of the world's nations in calling upon the international community to discharge its responsibility in full to put an end to this arrogance and to rectify this unacceptable situation.

In this connection, we believe that the convening of this emergency special session of the General Assembly is an opportunity for the international community to reaffirm that it is necessary to keep to the path of peace, and for it to take firm and effective practical measures to impose respect for all resolutions adopted by competent international bodies, so as to confirm what is right, remove what is wrong, and eliminate anything that could pose a threat to international peace and security.

Arab leaders have repeatedly affirmed their insistence on the peace option as a strategic and political goal, provided that it is based on the principle of land for peace, on respect for the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people — in particular its right to establish an independent State of its own — and on Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories on the basis of binding international resolutions. Anything else can only delay the peace process and the achievement of a solution acceptable to all parties; it could also open the way for even worse possibilities, pose a threat to the peace, security and stability of the region, and give rise to serious developments with an impact on the entire international situation.

Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): This emergency special session of the General Assembly has been convened to consider measures against Israel because of the continuation and intensification of its settlement activities in the occupied Arab territories. It has been convened following the failure of the Security Council to adopt the necessary measures.

I want to state Lebanon's grave concern at Israel's continued illegal policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Arab Golan, in particular the ongoing establishment of settlements. These violate the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, the Hague Rules of 1907, the two dozen Security Council resolutions relating to settlements, and the relevant General Assembly resolutions — quite apart from the serious threat they pose to the entire peace process.

I reaffirm that the Arab Group has turned in the past, turns now and will turn in the future to the United Nations, both in the General Assembly and in the Security Council, to underscore the Arab commitment to the peace process that began in Madrid in 1991. This reflects support for the process and for its frame of reference: Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). Meanwhile, by continuing its policy of settlements in the occupied Arab territories, Israel is seeking to discard that frame of reference and persists in rejecting all international resolutions and all norms of international law. Peace will be achieved in accordance with the principle of land for peace, or not at all.

It is useless to try to repudiate the consistent elements accepted at Madrid. It is everyone's

responsibility to help save the peace process from failure. Israel must put a complete halt to its settlement activities if it wants to achieve the peace envisaged and desired at Madrid. We reaffirm the role of United Nations forces in the region, such as the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Palestine, in the implementation of the relevant international resolutions.

With the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference and the establishment of the principles and foundations of the peace process, we had hoped for a new dawn in our region and for a just and lasting peace. The Arabs endeavoured sincerely to participate in that process, but Israel's continued settlement policy and its policy of expansion and the confiscation of land dampened our hopes. Then the new Israeli Government dealt those hopes a nearly mortal blow by indicating that it would shirk the obligations on which the peace process was founded: it made settlement activities an important part of its political priorities, and has refused to resume the peaceful negotiations which had continued in spite of all the difficulties. Israel has also begun to adopt grave new measures aimed at annexing East Jerusalem.

Today, therefore, we meet for the fifth time in eight months — three times in the Security Council and two in the General Assembly — to focus on Israel's illegal policies and activities in occupied East Jerusalem aimed at changing the legal status and demographic composition of that city. The Assembly is today considering violations of international law: the occupation of territory and the establishment of settlements, including in Jerusalem. Some weeks ago, the Israeli authorities began the construction of a new 6,500-unit settlement south of East Jerusalem, in the Jabal Abu Ghneim area. This is part of a series of similar Israeli actions, such as the announcement of a new settlement in Ras al-Amud within the original municipal boundaries of East Jerusalem. Moreover, the Israeli authorities demolished the Burj al-Laqlaq centre within the walls of the Old City, in order to build a new settlement in its place.

All of this paves the way for the gradual ejection of Arabs from East Jerusalem. In previous statements, including our most recent statement in the Security Council, we have referred to this repeatedly. Various human rights organizations, including Israeli organizations, have published reports proving that successive Israeli Governments have had a premeditated policy of easing the Arab population out of the Holy City. We have repeatedly cautioned that such illegal expansionist Israeli activities and policies in East Jerusalem are matters of extreme seriousness, because Jerusalem is of central importance to the Arab, Islamic and Christian worlds, as well as to the international community at large and to three major religions.

The Israeli authorities continue to keep the tunnel under Al-Haram Al-Sharif open, in spite of Security Council resolution 1073 (1996) on that matter.

I would like to reaffirm our firm position concerning the right of peoples to resist foreign occupation, which has been established in various international documents, including the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations. We would also like to reaffirm our condemnation of Israeli terrorism in the occupied Arab territories. In that context, we would like to underscore the following facts.

First, we are in complete solidarity with the Palestinian people, who refuse to be subjugated by occupation and settlement despite the strength of the occupying force.

Secondly, the current settlement problem is not a new one, but is a result of the Israeli mentality and the current Israeli policy. Therefore, in order to deal with this problem, the international community, as represented by our emergency special session, must take a clear stance to reaffirm to the Government of Israel its complete rejection of the appropriation of the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, and the settlement activities in other occupied Arab territories. By doing so, we will be serving the future of peace in the region at a time when Israel has struck at the basis of the peace process by its settlement policies. Leniency towards the rulers of Israel, in the Security Council in particular, has resulted in destruction and violence for both Arabs and Israelis. Our position is in keeping with the resolutions of international legality and with international law, which remains the cornerstone of the contemporary civilized world.

We deem it the duty of the General Assembly at its emergency special session to act for the implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Charter and the resolutions of the Security Council by the same standards used in other parts of the Middle East and the world. We would like to recall Security Council resolutions 252 (1968), 267 (1969), 298 (1971), and 467 (1980), which considered all administrative and legislative actions taken by Israel in Jerusalem null and void.

We call for a General Assembly resolution that unequivocally expresses the international community's rejection of Israel's policies and its measures to annex Jerusalem and expand the settlements. We would like the resolution to contain specific measures to bring Israel and those involved in the settlement activities into compliance with international legitimacy. We call for a clear position that reflects the international community's insistence on proceeding with the peace process in accordance with the principles of Madrid, particularly the principle of land for peace, and with the various obligations assumed on all tracks during negotiations.

All present here are called upon to discharge their historic responsibilities. Waiting is not in the interest of peace. Events in the region threaten repercussions that will not be confined to the region alone. The General Assembly's position must stand in clear opposition to the Israeli position, or it will not be a position at all. Some of the vague positions that have taken Israeli sensibilities into account have caused grave damage to the peace process, which is now in danger of expiring. The continuation of settlement means the end for peace in the region. This special session of the General Assembly has a historic responsibility to save peace in the Middle East.

Thirdly, the pretext of security, which is constantly cited by the Israelis as a justification for expansionist settlement measures and on the basis of which the current Israeli Government came to power, has proved invalid. Those measures have led to increased violence and tension between Arabs and Israelis. What kind of peace can be established as long as occupation continues? In a situation imposed by force, peace cannot be established or survive and is doomed to failure. Genuine peace is within our grasp on the basis of the principles that we all accepted in Madrid, foremost among which are land for peace and the full implementation of international resolutions that reaffirm the need for Israel to withdraw from all occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem and the Golan, to the boundaries of 4 June 1967, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as the need for it to withdraw from Lebanon to that country's internationally recognized borders, in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

The measures taken within the peace process must not allow Israel to elude the pressures of public opinion and the international community. Israel must not be allowed to proceed with its current settlement projects.

Fourthly and finally, we look to the sponsors of the peace process in the Middle East to play their important role in convincing Israel to rescind its settlement decision on Jabal Abu Ghneim, retreat from its settlement policies, reactivate the peace process as a whole and resume that process from the point it had reached, on the basis of the Madrid principles, the land-for-peace formula and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), and 425 (1978).

Today it is urgently necessary that the two sponsors of the peace process give it a new impetus in accordance with the principles agreed upon in Madrid, with a view to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region. From this rostrum, we call upon all involved to continue to play their roles and to make the necessary efforts to convince Israel to give up its policy of settlements and to return to the Madrid framework.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.